

# **Washington Successful Districts Study**

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**Prepared for the  
K-12 Advisory Committee of  
Washington Learns**

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# Purpose of the Study

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## To learn more about:

- **How successful districts and schools within them produced improvements in student academic achievement**
- **How they used and reallocated resources to help accomplish those results**

# Methodology

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## Sample Selection

- **The *Washington Learns* K-12 Advisory Committee & OSPI nominated districts.**
- **District level study results set performance criteria.**
- **Additional district level analysis identified districts that “beat the odds.”**
- **Schools were selected within districts based on performance criteria.**

# Sample Demographics

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## **Purposive Sample of 9 Successful Districts**

- **17 Elementary Schools**
- **7 Middle Schools**
- **6 High Schools**
- **1 Pk-12 School**

## **20,365 Students**

- **33% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch**
- **12% Special Education**
- **8% English Language Learners**



# Student Performance

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- **Several schools doubled and tripled their students' scores on the WASL.**
- **Schools produced learning gains above levels predicted for their student demographics.**
- **Accomplished within the last five years.**

# Key School Improvement Elements of Successful Districts

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- 1. Focus on Educating *all* Students**
- 2. Use Data to Drive Decisions**
- 3. Adopt a Rigorous Curriculum & Align to State Standards**
- 4. Support Instructional Improvement with Effective Professional Development**
- 5. Restructure the Learning Environment**
- 6. Provide Struggling Students with Extended Learning Opportunities**



# Key School Improvement Elements of Successful Districts

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## 1. Focus on Educating *all* Students

- Mission and instructional vision statements set high expectations for *all* students.
- Teachers and administrators take responsibility for *all* students' learning.
- Gear curriculum and instruction towards *all* types of students.

# Key School Improvement Elements of Successful Districts

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## 2. Use Data to Drive Decisions

- **Begin by looking at student data.**
- **Identify holes in curriculum & instruction.**
- **Identify struggling students.**
- **Create teams to address curriculum gaps.**
- **Focus professional development on improving instruction in targeted areas.**
- **Create continuous assessment & feedback loops to identify struggling students.**
- **Differentiate instruction & provide struggling students with extra help.**



# Key School Improvement Elements of Successful Districts

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## **3. Adopt a Rigorous Curriculum & Align to State Standards**

- **Create in-house curriculum or adopt research-based curriculum aligned to state standards.**
- **Train teachers and provide them with instructional coaches to effectively implement the new curriculum.**
- **Develop formative assessments aligned to district's curriculum & state standards.**



# Key School Improvement Elements of Successful Districts

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## **4. Support Instructional Improvement with Effective Professional Development**

- **Instructional coaches focused on content**
- **Collaborative planning time**
- **Training on rigorous curricula and  
research-based instructional strategies**

# Key School Improvement Elements of Successful Districts

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## **5. Restructure the Learning Environment**

- **Small learning communities for students**
- **Multiage classrooms**
- **Continuous ability grouping for reading**
- **Reduced class sizes**
- **More instructional time in core content areas: block scheduling, longer school days, double periods**

# Key School Improvement Elements of Successful Districts

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## **6. Provide Struggling Students with Extended Learning Opportunities**

- **Quickly identify struggling students & focus help on core curriculum**
- **Early childhood programs & full-day kindergarten**
- **Tutoring, double periods of core classes, WASL preparation, & ELL programs**
- **Before & after school programs**
- **Summer School**

# Instructional Leadership

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- **Build instructional leadership capacity in administrators and lead teachers**
- **Minimize administrative roles & focus on instruction instead**
- **Provide teachers with constructive feedback on instruction**
- **Leadership team builds buy-in for change process**

# Professional Learning Communities

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- **Time provided for teacher collaboration focused on improving instruction**
- **Vertical and horizontal teaming**
- **Culture change: Teachers are considered experts who learn from each other**

# Resource Use in the Average Sample School

<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Evidence-Based Model</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Principals</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.99</b>
<b>Asst. Principals</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.63</b>
<b>Instr. Coaches</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.36</b>
<b>Core Teachers</b>	<b>30.24</b>	<b>22.89</b>
<b>Spec. Teachers</b>	<b>7.43</b>	<b>7.31</b>
<b>Tutors</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>0.12*</b>
<b>Librarians**</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>0.63</b>
<b>Pupil Support</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>4.02</b>

\*Does not include classified staff, or tutors providing services to groups of larger than 5 students.

\*\*Does not include library aides.



# School-based Administrative Resources

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- **The evidence-based model and actual practice for staffing principals are about the same: 1 principal for each school.**
- **The schools studied had slightly more AP positions.**



# WA School Resource Uses: Instructional Facilitators

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- **Less than half of the schools that we studied had instructional coaches.**
- **Except for categorical dollars, the current WA allocation model does not provide resources for instructional coaches.**
- **Principals either release a teacher for part of the school day to work with other teachers as an instructional coach, or the district provides an instructional coach that is shared with other schools.**

# WA School Resource Use: Students per Core Teacher

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	<b>Evidence-Based Model</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Elementary</b>	<b>18:1</b>	<b>Range (19-29):1 Average 23:1</b>
<b>Middle</b>	<b>25:1</b>	<b>Range (26-39):1 Average 30:1</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>25:1</b>	<b>Range (37-45):1 Average 42:1</b>

# WA School Resource Use: Specialist Teachers per Student

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- **There were somewhat more specialists in the schools studied, on average, than the evidence-based model would provide**
- **This is due mainly to the several large high schools in the sample**

# WA School Resource Uses: Tutors

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- **There were only a few tutors in the sampled schools, even though many had federal Title I money and state categorical dollars.**
  - **Tutors are in Reading First Schools and a few “double performance” schools**
- **The evidence-based model provides substantial tutor resources & tutoring by a licensed teacher is the highest impact extra help strategy.**

# WA School Resource Uses: Librarians

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- **Sample schools seemed to be short on librarians.**
- **There was less than 1 librarian for each school whereas the evidence based model provides a librarian for every school, except the very small schools.**

## WA School Resource Uses: Guidance Counselors, Nurses, etc.

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- **The various pupil support, family outreach resources in the sample schools were close to what the model would provide**

# WA School Resource Uses: Instructional Aides

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- **22** Library Aides
- **35** Resource Room Aides
- **19** ELL Aides
- **11** Other Extra Help Aides
- **67** Special Education Inclusion Aides
- **57** Special Education Resource Room Aides
- **18** Other Instructional Aides

= Total of **229** Instructional Aides

# Implications of Results

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## Progression of the reform efforts

- Reform often starts at the elementary level, makes its way to the middle schools, and many times does not materialize in the high schools. Further, reform efforts often only reach one or two content areas.
- Therefore, *Washington Learns* may want to recommend mandating funding for successful strategies at the school level, and recommend enough funding to allow for reform at all grade levels and content areas.



# Implications of Results

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## **Recommend Funding Critical Resources**

- **Effective professional development**
  - 10 days of pupil-free time for training & collaboration
  - Trainers
  - Instructional coaches in schools
- **Extra help strategies for struggling students**
  - Tutors
  - Before & after school programs
  - Summer school

# Washington Learns K-12 Advisory Committee

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## Discussion & Questions



# Contact Information

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